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New and rarely recorded species from the Tristan da Cunha group

by *M. W. Fraser*

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Details are given here of observations of uncommon or previously unrecorded birds at Inaccessible Island in the Tristan da Cunha group (37°15'S, 12°30'W) made by the Denstone Expedition between October 1982 and February 1983. The first 2 are additional to the list given by Fraser (1983).

DOVE PRION *Pachyptila desolata*

The remains of 2 Dove Prions (one complete ossified skull and one lower mandible, kindly identified by G. Avery of the South African Museum) were found in fresh pellets of Subantarctic Skuas *Catharacta skua* on Blenden Hall beach, one in October and one in November. Since it is unlikely that these skuas fly very far to forage during the breeding season, abundant prey being available locally, the implication is that the Dove Prions were taken on or near the island and constitute a valid record. No further evidence for the species was obtained throughout the period.

The taxonomy and nomenclature of the genus *Pachyptila* is not fully agreed (Harrison 1983). Cox (1980) considers *P. desolata* to be a subspecies of the Broad-billed Prion *P. vittata*, but Harper (1982) accords *P. desolata* specific status. The only prion known previously from the group is *P. vittata vittata*, which breeds on all 3 islands—Tristan, Inaccessible and Nightingale (Hagen 1952, Wace & Holdgate 1976)—so that the specimens described here form an addition to the islands' avifauna.

GREY-BACKED STORM PETREL *Garrodia nereis*

On the night of 15 October 2 Grey-backed Storm Petrels, together with 43 White-faced Storm Petrels *Pelagodroma marina*, were found on board M.V. S.A. *Agulhas* anchored off Salt Beach, on the northern coast of Inaccessible. These were the only observations made of this storm petrel during the time spent on the island.

A previous suggestion that the species might occur in the Tristan group was made by Mathews & Gordon (1932), and Mathews (1937) actually listed it as a Tristan breeding species, but in neither case with any supporting evidence; Hagen (1952) deleted the species from the list, a move upheld by Elliott (1957). Mathews' (1937) record probably resulted from a transcription error, since he does not list the species from Gough, 425 km to the south, where a specimen had been collected first

in 1922 (Wilkins 1923) and where it has since been proved to breed (Clancey 1981), although the number of recent records from the island is still small (Williams & Imber 1982). Its exact status on Inaccessible remains unclear.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis*

A juvenile was seen and subsequently mist-netted at a small fresh water pool at Blenden Hall on 1 November. The bird was examined in the hand, photographed and ringed before being released. A full description was taken and the biometric data are as follows : wing 122 mm; culmen 23 mm; tarsus 25.5 mm; middle toe (including claw) 24 mm; weight 53.0 g. What may have been the same juvenile bird, although it was not possible to see if it was ringed, was seen on 10 November. An adult White-rumped Sandpiper was found at Warren Cliff on 3 December and a similar bird frequented Blenden Hall 19-21 December. The first juvenile bird was seen to feed hesitantly among resting Subantarctic Skuas; the last bird was twice harried by skuas as it attempted to forage along the tideline, but remained in the area over the subsequent 2 days. Wace & Holdgate (1976) include the White-rumped Sandpiper on the Tristan da Cunha list from "observations by C. C. H. Elliott and Wace on vagrant landbirds in the islands in 1968", but no further details are given.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

There appear to be only 2 published records of Swallows from the Tristan group, both from the main island and both described as *H. rustica erythrogaster* (Hagen 1952, Elliott 1953). The Denstone Expedition made the following sight records on Inaccessible : 1 November (one) ; 2 November (3) ; 6 November (2) ; 7 November (one) ; 10 November (4) ; 11-13 November (3). It is likely that these birds were also *erythrogaster* of American origin as they arrived after periods of strong westerly winds and simultaneously with the White-rumped Sandpipers.

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